

Interactions with the Public or Media

In order to avoid misinformation or incomplete information being given to the public or media, it is usually best to refer inquiries to the City's Communications Officer. This is especially true when you are asked questions related to areas outside of your responsibility. However, even in matters related to your Board or Commission mission, remember that only the City Council and City Manager can place any issue within the context of the "big picture". The following guidelines should, therefore, be observed:

1. Focus on being a good listener, not a talker. Your duty, with respect to the public, is to gather information.
2. Welcome public input at your meetings, but do not enter into debates with the public.
3. Discourage the public and media from engaging you in conversation outside of your meetings, when such communication relates to issues being decided by your Board/Commission as a whole in a public meeting.
4. In public meetings, conduct yourself in a manner that is fair, understanding and gracious. Give equal consideration to various interests, attitudes and opinions, whether or not they coincide with your own.
5. In conversation with the public and media, ensure that it is clearly understood when you are expressing your own personal opinion. Develop a set of standard, clarifying phrases, e.g., "As a private citizen, I believe that...".
6. Do not make any statements that can be construed to be binding on the City. Remember you make recommendations to the Council, but the final actions are taken by the City Council.
7. Refer inquiries and comments regarding policy to the City Council.
8. If you are unsure about how to respond to a question or comment, no response at all is the safest course. Refer the individual to the City's Communications Officer.